



Examinations Contingency Plan

For national examinations

August 2015

1. Introduction

The Examinations Contingency Plan is designed to ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of major disruption to national examinations at the College. It is a requirement of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland that all centres have their own contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions. With the College offering qualifications from awarding bodies under the JCQ's jurisdiction the College must have such a plan in place. There is no such requirement in Scotland however good practice would suggest that having such a plan is desirable and the Scottish Qualifications Authority has been involved in the compilation of the rest of the UK plan to ensure its approach adopts the same principles of fairness, transparency, evidence and integrity. SQA have a national contingency plan.

2. Scope

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruption to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any actions taken will be subject to the advice and approval of the awarding body.

In the event of major disruption, communication is a key factor in ensuring an effective and consistent response. This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as awarding bodies, candidates, parents or carers and the public.

Where the circumstances leading to major disruption are at a national level the contingency plans will be coordinated through the national plan held by either SQA or through Ofqual for other UK awarding bodies. Details of whether specific contingencies have been agreed across organisations will be confirmed on the Ofqual website or by SQA and proactively communicated to relevant stakeholders.

Implementing the plan will safeguard the interests of candidates while maintaining the integrity of the examination system and safeguarding qualification standards.

The contingencies applied will be selected based on the context of the disruption.

The priority when implementing contingencies will be to maintain two principles:

- Delivering assessments to published timetables
- Complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment and standards.

If the usual contingencies are no longer sufficient to maintain these outcomes the awarding body is updated immediately of the circumstances.

3. Key Principles

There are a number of circumstances that may lead to major disruption of the examination process. These include:

- Disruption of teaching time – the College is closed for an extended period
- Disruption in the distribution of examination papers
- Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centres remain open
- The College is unable to open as normal during the examination period
- Assessment evidence is destroyed or damaged

In any of these circumstances the contingency plan should be implemented.

The Principal and SMT will implement the plan possibly in conjunction with the wider college emergency plan. A contingency planning team will be formed with the lead senior manager being the Vice Principal: Quality & Innovation.

The team leader will report on a daily basis to the Principal until a clear plan is in place in coordination with the awarding body.

The plan is monitored throughout the period of disruption with any changes reported to the Principal and agreed with the awarding body.

The contingency planning team are required to ensure that there are no adverse consequences for students/candidates with special assessment arrangements. They should liaise with the awarding body and apply for amendments to special examination arrangements where this is necessary.

Where alternative transport arrangements are required these will be implemented in conjunction with the local authority and transport providers.

Guidance is given below for each potential scenario.

3.1 Disruption of teaching time – the College is closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- The College is closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning.

Recommended actions:

Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, the College will make alternative arrangements to prepare students, as usual, for examinations. In practice this will rely on online services such as Moodle. Where students do not have internet access the College will look to make arrangements with other partners or organisations to allow students to access online resources.

- In the case of courses where there is more than one diet per annum, the College may advise candidates to sit examinations in the next available diet

3.2 Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the College in advance of examinations.

Recommended actions:

- The College will notify the awarding body that it hasn't received the papers by the due date and will arrange with the awarding body to source alternative couriers for delivery of hardcopies or for fax or electronic access. The Examinations Officer must ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions.

3.3 Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centres remain open

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Candidates are unable to attend the College to take examinations as normal.

Recommended actions:

- The College will liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
- The College will offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- The College will apply to the awarding body for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply.

3.4 The College is unable to open as normal during the examination period

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- The College is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

If the College is unable to open as normal for examinations it will inform the awarding body immediately it is aware of these circumstances.

The Principal is responsible for deciding whether it is safe for the College to open. The circumstances and actions taken in such a situation are detailed in the College's emergency plan. The Principal will act on advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether it is safe to open.

Recommended actions:

- The College opens for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible
- The College uses alternative venues in agreement with the relevant awarding body (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible)
- The College may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available diet
- The College may apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

3.5 Assessment evidence is destroyed or damaged

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Recommended actions:

- The College informs the awarding body of the incident that led to the damage of the scripts or assessment evidence
- Candidates to retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Principal is responsible for implementing the plan in consultation with SMT when required and in conjunction with any action taken through the broader College Emergency Plan
- 4.2 The Vice Principal Quality & Innovation is responsible for authoring and reviewing the plan. In a contingency situation the Vice Principal will lead and coordinate the work of the contingency planning team
- 4.3 The Head of Management Information Services is responsible for liaising with the awarding body and making alternative arrangements
- 4.4 The MIS staff are responsible implementing the contingency plan
- 4.5 The Heads of Faculty and Head of Business Development Unit are responsible for communication with affected students/candidates
- 4.6 All staff are responsible for collaborating with the contingency planning team

5. Related Documents

Internal

- Assessment Policy and Procedure
- Student Guide to being Assessed and making Academic Appeals
- Student Handbook
- Business Continuity Plan
- Emergency Plan.

External

- Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Contingency Management Framework for SQA's Examination and Awarding Procedures

6. Review

This plan will be reviewed every three years.

Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations

Awarding organisations are responsible for:	Examination centres are responsible for:
	Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning
Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations	Preparing candidates for examinations
	Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions
	Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open
Advising centres on possible alternative examination arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative examination arrangements	Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations
Evaluating and declining/approving requests for special consideration	Judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding organisations
	Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	The distribution of examination results to candidates

Useful information

AQA	https://www.aqa.org.uk/	JCQ	www.jcq.org.uk
CCEA	www.rewardinglearning.org.uk	Ofqual	www.ofqual.gov.uk
City & Guilds	www.cityandguilds.com	DfE	www.education.gov.uk
Edexcel	www.edexcel.com	DfE – Exams Delivery Support	http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/examsadmin/a00197093/edsu
EDI	www.ediplc.com	DENI	www.deni.gov.uk
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk	UCAS	www.ucas.ac.uk
VTCT	www.vtct.org.uk	Welsh Government	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en
WJEC	www.wjec.co.uk	SQA	www.sqa.org.uk
JCQ A guide to the special consideration process	http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/a-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process		
JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations	www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations		
DfE guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning	http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather		
DENI guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning	http://www.deni.gov.uk/exceptional_closures_checklist.pdf www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-school-management/exceptional-closure-of-schools-due-to-adverse-weather.htm http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/school-closures		
SQA Contingency Management Framework for SQA's Examination and Awarding Procedures	https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sqa.org.uk%2Fsqa%2Ffiles_ccc%2FContingency%2520Management%2520Framework%2520for%2520SQAs%2520Examandawarding1305-%2520FINAL.doc		

